

Prism

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PRISM

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Freedom and Righteousness

I am throwing their false idea of freedom
Into the fire
And their forged notion of righteousness
To the rottweilers.

What about the freedom of my own
That bleeds far more colors
Than just the red, white and blue
Mentioned in a country song?

What about the righteousness that exists
Outside of a church?

I can't stay here any longer.
Like a thief in the night, getting her own back,
I am stuffing my freedom and righteousness into a sack
And heading off on the road
With Keourac and all those other Jacks,
Where tolerance and compassion alone are king
And I will never doubt my power.

Allison Merkle

I AM

I am a woman...

Witty, sexy, smart

I am a girl...

Innocent, fearless, good at heart

I am a daughter...

Beautiful, scared, cared for

I am a mother...

Caring, loving, strong

I am a female...

Intelligent, adventuresome, courageous

I am all of the things I am proud of...

And those I regret

I am all of these things individually...

Yet all at once

Who am I?

I am who I want to be

I am all I can be

Simply put,

I AM ME!

A 15 Year Old Brazilian with Cat Eyes and Hoop Earrings

I lie in my bed and I think about her. We talk forever and when I dream about her... I wonder if she dreams about me. Does she dream about me, but in the way I dream about her?

She's taller than me by a head but in my dreams we are in bed and our bodies fit perfectly. She smells like coconut, a smell that both of us admit turns us on.

We're lying in bed, talking. For once I don't mention your sister or your pretend boyfriend, or my pretend girlfriend. "Te quieros, bonita," I tell you, "Te quieros tambien...Que bella ares" ...and you giggle in your childish way, with wine and caramel candies on your breath. I tell you my plans of world dictatorship while staring into your eyes and kissing your knuckles. Your body amazes me but yet I am still ashamed to watch you undress. Sometimes I wish you would stop talking but I can't get enough of your voice when we make love. We proclaim our love for each other but we refuse to be girlfriends. I still scoff at your sexuality. You don't seem to have one though you claim to be straight.

I guess you're the closest I'll ever get to Brazil, sneaking down to your house in the thick of twilight, sneaking into your window, lying in bed talking about whatever. I never want you to go, only to come. "Que rica eres," I whisper in your ear. Still trapped in your

venus flytrap, I'm never letting go. "Ay, ay dios mios...mi gusta...a ci, a ci, te amos..."

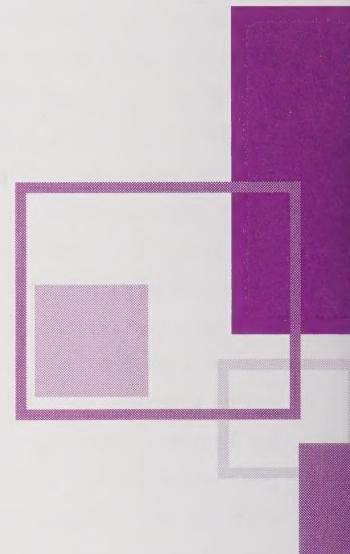
I promised you the world when I took your virginity, and the world you got. We escaped the modern sludge, fought the law and we danced by the light of the moon.

...And so I dreamed. God forbid my girlfriend (a.k.a. your big sister) finds out...

Queeneta Allen

House of Cards

I know, though a seer hasn't told,
That this is what my future holds:
My children and I
Basking like cats in the morning sun.
Writing until I die.
Afternoons devoted to art
That expands the horizons
Of the mind and the heart.
Nights full of knowledge,
Whether it comes from a book in my hands
Or from the embrace of a beloved man.
Every day discovering that,
Though it takes all sorts,
The world's supply of beautiful souls
Will never run short.
If all these things are not in my cards already,
I will fashion a new deck of my own -
Or else nowhere I go will ever be my home.



I Speak For The Neglected Colors

Roses are red, Violets are blue...

Wait a minute! Hold on a second!

I'm sorry to make a fuss,

I'm sorry to interrupt, but,

I speak for the neglected colors.

Green, Purple and Yellow are outraged,

The twins, Black and White,

and Gold and Silver,

are weeping piteously.

And Orange and Pink are upset
because they aren't getting their recognition,
which they rightfully and honestly deserve.

These colors demand answers,
pronto, chop-chop, NOW!

Why Red? Why Red?

RED!

Don't get me wrong, Red is nice,
the color of Love, beach sunsets, and such,

But, why must Roses be called Red,
when they come in other more beautiful colors,
not just red, dull uninteresting Red?
What about Lemon Yellow, Powder Pink,
Pearly White, and Dreamy Violet?

VIOLET!

Why must Violets always be said to be Blue?
Violets are Violet, a deep royal Purple, not that Blue!

Violets are Violet, glorious Purple,
some have little Orange and Black faces,
which point upwards towards the radiantly Yellow sun!

What is the cause of this entire problem,
the fuss, the outrage, the snubbing and mourning?

What started the reason why Roses are only red,
and Violets are solely blue?

Why, without the other colors,
this world would be only painted in Red and Blue.

What a boring and dreary place it would be!

I speak for the neglected colors,
for they crave justice and equality!

Erika Galluppi

Ramblings of a Confused Young Woman

Does happiness really exist or is it an illusion we subject ourselves to in order to deal with the confusion of everyday life?

Is there a key to living life happily, or is it merely a gigantic cosmic guessing game set up to keep the poor Homo sapiens struggling to find true bliss?

Is religion a release from all the societal pressures by putting so much faith in an all knowing, all seeing being or is it a way of coping out and not dealing with the realities of every day life?

If there really a way to live without being hurt?

Can love ever work out in a way that doesn't end in heartache?

Is death really the only true salvation?

Is there a way to get beyond all the bull-shit and lies and truly know someone?

Once you get to know someone, are they really worth knowing?

Is sex a show of love, or does sex cheapen the words by putting them to an action that can be so carnal and animalistic?

Why do people like me spend so much time questioning life, love and the meaning of the universe when we should be out wasting our college years at bars, frat parties and in the beds of our fellow students engaging in pre marital coitus?

Why do I feel so lonely when I came to college in hopes of meeting people who enjoy learning as much as I do?

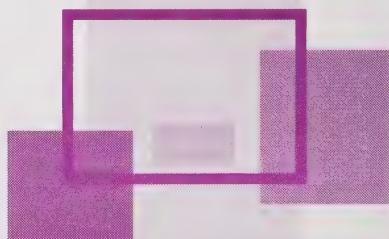
Why do I feel so empty when I'm surrounded by people who love and care for me?

Why am I sitting here typing on my keyboard when I could be out living it up with my friends?

Why am I too much of a chicken to admit that my life and my feelings are mine and mine alone?

Why do I even care?

Sam Collins



Strands



Off to the distance

Her glance travels.

Thoughts unsure

Hands are calm.

Her beauty and grace

Admired by many.

Her mind, hands yearn to be free

Strands of expectations

Strands of stereotypes

Wrapped around her delicate being.

To stand and move, break free

To sit and remain still, stay tied down.

Decision must be made

Which way will she go?

Joanna Grey



Submissions

He lives within me.

A breathing, moving entity thrives inside of me.

He wills me to go on, to live and breathe and be.

Blood mixed with blood, heart mixed with soul, he controls me.

I can't live for myself anymore.

I am his.

I obey.

Letter by letter and word-by-word I do only as he desires.

Evoking my essence, we go on, and no one is the wiser.

I feel him.

As he grows, I grow.

As he changes, I change.

As he forms, I fade away.

Sam Collins

The Old Woman Who Makes Dolls

The old woman who makes dolls
Tells me stories of her life
Through seven teeth
Because the others got tired of hearing
The same stories
And let go
The old woman who makes dolls
Tells me stories of her life
From the back room of the market
Where the heat won't go
And the cold won't stop
Holding my hands
The old woman who makes dolls
Tells me stories of her life
Smiling and cussing
Because she's thankful for my weekend company
But her back hurts today
Worse than her knees do when it rains
The old woman who makes dolls
Tells me stories of her life
Because no one visits her anymore
And I help her pass the time
Before she has to drive two hours
To her lonely house
The old woman who makes dolls
Tells me stories of her life
That I forget
In the room of things that smell like
Damp basements and sour milk
Until her register has five dollars
And she says,
"It was a good day,"
And begins to cry

Summer Al-Abdalli

Addict's Reward

"Are you afraid, little one?" He laughs cruelly, his beautiful face alight with excitement. She shakes her head quickly, eyes wide and frightened.

"Then, do it!" He commands, dangerously hostile, yet overwhelmingly attractive.

"I'm scared." She whimpers. She cringes away from him, shaking all over.

"Come now, it's easy." He coaxes in a gentler voice. His fangs are bared, yet he's kind, charming, and sweetly smiling. She swallows hard, her throat tightening as if she were the one dreading, trembling, and moaning on the floor. As if it were she, and not that pathetic little - - -

"I can stop anytime I want, right?" She asks fearfully, staring uneasily at the figure weeping at her feet.

"Of course." He reassures her, a grin on his wide lips. Hesitantly, she lifts her weapon. A child's baseball bat already stained ruby-red with the victim's life-blood. She pokes experimentally between the shaking shoulders.

"Again!" He thunders, dark beautiful eyes glittering. Lips parted, she obeys. The blows rain. Snow flakes, tentatively soft at first, then swift bruising rain, then hail the size of boulders. Finally, a full-blown hurricane.

"Mercy." Her victim gurgles faintly, bloody tears streaming down pale cheeks. Strengthened by the adrenaline coursing through her veins, and hearing only his words of encouragement, she doesn't relent.

"More." He breathes. She continues her barrage of torture and ignores the piteous cries for help. Strange, wondrous emotions slam into her soul. She is flying high in the air, free as a bird.

"Good!" He crows triumphantly, grabbing her weapon. She growls, petulant as a naughty infant. She wants to snatch it back, craving the cold feel of the weapon in her hands. Yearning for the feelings to return.

"Patience, my dear. Your time will come." He hands her a thin rod of metal. She seizes it eagerly, her eyes bright with a strange, wild light. Whirling about, she tests the new instrument on the prone body crumpled at her feet.

"Stop! Please!" Her victim shrieks and curls into a ball. Annoyed, she shakes the echo of the cry from her head. The blows come faster and harder, and harder. New sensations overtake and replace. How could she ever have been satisfied with those old feelings? Now, overwhelmingly powerful and almighty is she!

"Enough, enough!" His booming laugh shatters her concentration, interrupts her routine, halts her momentum.

"I like it!" She protests angrily. "It feels so good."

"This is better!" He reassures her, radiating with pride. Something small and evil is shoved into her hands. She stares at the new object and giggles with barely contained glee.

"A gun! Can I play?" She crows with delight. Her finger curls lovingly around the trigger as she aims down at the pathetic creature.

"No! Please!" Her victim stretches up bloodied hands, pawing her legs, daring to stop fate, yet knowing it is all futile. She pauses, loving the suspense, eagerly awaiting the great feelings THIS would bring.

"Squeeze, don't jerk it." He reminds her, ever-loving, ever-kind, his lips the same ruby shade of the stickiness coating her hands.

"You'll regret it!" Her victim croaks, eyes closing, welcoming the end. She doesn't heed. Squeezing, not jerking the trigger. The gun bellows loudly, and her victim half-rises, screeching one last time, then slumps down.

"No. No. No!" A scream erupts from her throat as something rips into her chest. White-hot pain searing her body, engulfing her in flames of unbearable agony. Blood exploding, roaring from her faintly beating breast.

"How do you feel, sweetheart?" He guffaws mockingly, yanking the gun from her suddenly limp hand.

"Help me." How did she become the pleading victim? She is now the beggar. She is now that pathetic little - - -

"Help yourself, fool." He shakes his head in disgust. Lost in confusion and pain, her former pleasure is now a mere memory. Suddenly comprehending his words, her knees start to buckle. Her legs collapse

beneath her, unable to support as her body grows heavier and heavier. She falls to the ground, mere inches from the gray face of her dying victim.

"No!" She moans, recognizing the face as that of her own.

"You killed us." Her victim smiles faintly, sadly.

"Silly child, you know better than to play Russian roulette with the devil." The figure sighs, gazing at her with all too familiar eyes. She shudders as something seeps coldly from her body, draining her of strength. Her victim sighs painfully, also feeling life drift away.

"Goodbye." The figure breathes one last time.

"No!" She whispers, horrified.

"This can not be happening. Not to me!" She gasps as tremendous waves of pain swept over her body. No no no!

"Denial is not just a river in Africa." He says, no longer beautiful.

"I didn't mean to, I'm sorry!" She pleads for her life, begs for a new chance. Redemption! But, nothing. No one is listening.

"I can't die!" She howls, anguished, feeling her own body stiffen, like that of her victim. Her eyes close. No energy is left to will them open again. A scream bubbles up in her throat and is released in a soft sigh. Pain no longer matters. Her senses dim. She sees only darkness. She hears his cruel laughter.

"Poor stupid fool." He sneers. And laughs again. He laughed, as she died.

Erika Galluppi

The Painting

a picture hangs on the wall
its story, its message unclear
its purpose, its meaning eluding the masses
and so it sits yearning to be set free
from its dying existence
its world of cobwebs and sorrow
a face on the canvas shines
innocent and withdrawn
passionate and reserved
wise and disturbed
aching to tell her tale
but silent she sits and waits to be queried
eyes probe her face
looking for answers
finding none they move on
another face hides behind her
more masculine
full of rage full of power
he watches her
his every thought controlling her
and she waits
never knowing
that his only dream is to know her
two faces wait in silent turmoil
two hearts stay suspended in time
aching for the moment when they can beat as one
his hidden power, urges, and desires will set her free
her guiding hand will protect him
together they could be whole
if only she would turn around
or if he would speak his mind
together
they would find all they needed
if only the silence would break

Sam Collins

If Hitler had Found Success as an Artist

"...and now we move on from the Van Gogh gallery, to view the work of another European artist who is much less widely known."

Alex felt Marion lightly touch her arm, and the two friends followed their tour guide into the next gallery. Alex stood on her toes and strained her neck to look up at one painting, hung high up on the wall in a decorative frame. It was a somber yet peaceful depiction of a small yellow house in a remote German village.

"Here are most of the paintings that make up his early period," said the female tour guide. "As you can see, he sharpened his teeth, so to speak, on the buildings and landscapes that he saw when he looked out his window every day as a young man. He had more pride for his homeland than I have ever seen in any other artist."

"You call this his early period - when did he move on to painting other things?" Marion asked.

"After he was accepted into a prestigious German art school," the guide responded. "Architecture was his favorite subject to paint, but his teachers did convince him to try his hand at painting things besides the outside world. That's when he moved on to portraits of women, including nudes, and animals and flowers."

Alex looked up at one of the portraits, and immediately felt a tiny, icy jump from within her. The penciled woman staring back at her from the wall reminded her of Marilyn Monroe - but this woman's face was not sweet and sexy. Instead she wore a very sinister smile. Alex felt the tour guide watching her, and did not want to show any sign of just how the painting had affected her.

"The women...almost all of them are blondes," Alex noted, shifting her gaze to the other paintings on the wall.

"Yes, he had quite a preference for fair-haired and fair-skinned people - although he did paint a few brunettes and he himself was dark. Very little is known about him, but he was said to be racist."

"Racist?" Marion repeated.

"Yes - and anti-Semitic. Most of that is specula-

tion, surmised from his work, but the few who did know this loner of an artist say he had some very strange ideas on what he saw as the superior race. He was a firm believer in Anglo-Saxon superiority, especially when it came to blonde-haired, blue-eyed, Christian, heterosexual Anglo-Saxons."

"But how can they speculate that just from his paintings?" Alex blurted out. Marion nodded, and whispered to Alex so the guide couldn't hear, "Yeah, can't you see the racism in that woman's breasts?"

"Artists often leave in their art clues to their own personalities that they never consciously meant to leave. I'll talk about that even more as we go on to the next artist..."

As the group moved on, Marion said quietly to Alex, "That's so creepy. I always thought that artists were all...you know...*pure souls*." And Alex sensed another cold prick of fear from she did not know where.

Allison Merkle

I guess, God only knows.

Some things we can't control.

It's been a long time since

I heard the squall of tires

Or cycling purr

Or even since I've listened to the
birds.

Sometimes it's too painful,

To acknowledge

But some things do.

That the past is the past.

And we must change with it.

This small town

I have lived a full life.

With its narrow roads.

I have made mistakes

Some things

And I have hurt.

Never change.

But I have learned

You have to do what's right for you.

You have to control

Your own destiny.

Don't let life pass you by.

Take hold of it

And wring it for all it's worth.

Lauren Dalia

Barbaric

what barbaric insults has he hurled

upon her body

to bring us both to sit in

these stiff hospital chairs?

what is it that keeps her hand

atop his in the midst of danger?

the lost child

i cannot save

destroyed behind my eyes.

air is weighty and

i wrack my brain

for a saviour i can phone.

i try not to

eat up drama

but

his fat and freckled face

frightens me.

suddenly

i see too clearly

the atrocities

he strives to hide.

My Dearest Love

Oh, how came it to be,
The existence of you and me?
This life of ours seems so unreal,
But with you my heart knows how to feel.
The two of us looking forward to the life beyond
Searching in hope to fulfill this everlasting bond.
Waiting for desire to make me complete,
And expecting both our souls to meet.
How our love will neither die nor end
A blessing it is, the love I send.
These emotions I have will always remain
As if you bled on my heart leaving a stain.
For it is you and you alone
In which I knew love has grown.

Jillian Leigh Pollock

Shoulders

How to reach my goals

To realize my dreams

One way I know

To stand

On the shoulders of giants

Those who have succeeded before

Learned from their mistakes

Their wisdom and knowledge

Increased through perseverance

If I stand firm

On the shoulders of their success

I can do nothing else

But reach out and secure

My dreams

Joanna Grey



Drinking Coffee

I sip greedily
at my cup
like a woman
gasping for air.

Laura Tanzini

The Secret of Life

I do not, can not, claim to know it all.
In fact, my short life has taught me very little
in the ways of knowledge and wisdom
However, I do know this, the well-kept secret,
The secret of life.
Come, I'll tell you.
I'll reveal to you why there is war, hatred and violence,
instead of the yearned-for peace, love and security;
why happiness must be bought, or earned,
instead of overflowing and abundant;
why children are afraid to laugh,
while their mothers live in fear in their own homes,
and fathers struggle to make it to the top;
why we must kill, or be killed,
and why life is death, in disguise,
why we blame others for death,
and fight to prove ourselves right,
when, in truth, we are killing ourselves;
why we try to shove responsibility,
on the shoulders of others,
because we are too weak and irresponsible,
to see our faults, and handle our problems;
why poverty and starvation are running wild,
and cruelty and abuse all too frequent;
and why "only the strong survive"
while the underdogs perish.
Come, I'll tell you this terrible secret,
that no one wants to hear, because the truth hurts.
I'll tell you why we act the way we do,
why things are the way they are,
and why we are slowly being wiped out.
Come, I'll whisper in your ear,
this secret which is in my heart.
I do not, can not, claim to know it all,
but I do know this, which I'm willing to share,
the secret of life.
Come.

Erika Galluppi

Life is too short
Not to enjoy it.
Oh, and how I have.
 The family.
 The friendships.
 The love.
That first love
 So innocent
 So naive
 So brave
 So pure
 So strong
 So reckless
 So reckless
 So reckless
 That
 it destroyed
 itself?
Or is that
 youth?
And what
 If
 I Would
have feared
 To love
 To laugh
 To give
 To share?
Just think
 What
 I would
Have missed.
My first heartbreak.
 I felt my heart
 Tear to pieces
 When the
Truth was revealed.
 But before
 I felt the
Fulfillment of
Communion
 In its
 Purest form.

Lauren Dalia

Where is the Peace?

Shouldn't we all get along?

This is the world to which we all belong.

What is fighting going to solve?

Hate is not impossible to resolve.

Where is the peace?

Is it hidden in a secret place?

Perhaps it's in a box

under hundreds of locks.

If so then everyone must come together as one

and use friendship as the key to break

the locks,

but what if peace can't be found in a locked box?

Then how do we find it?

and why haven't we yet?

Ashley Howell

The Colors of the World

Last night I had an experience of a lifetime; it took the form of a strange dream, which, incredulous as it may seem, I was able to vividly recall this morning. This dream was not lost in the hazy amnesia that blankets my memory of the night's activities. No, I can recall each and every detail of my experience, for it plays, rewinds, and replays throughout my mind, a constant reminder of the night's activities.

Some may interpret it as religious vision, and call me a prophet or religious fanatic. Others may scoff and laugh, and insist it was merely a hallucination, a delusion due to my hours before the television, and shameless absorption of novels, which are guilty of putting refuse into my head and lies and fabrications on my tongue. I say that this event should be simply and easily classed as an 'experience.' It was nothing more, and certainly not less, I assure you.

There, it's settled, I had an 'experience' last night. You may listen to my tale, and concur with my explanation wholeheartedly. Or maybe you'll come to some other wild conclusion to define this unexplainable incident. Perhaps you can help me to come to a better understanding.

This night past, I was rudely and violently jerked out of the subconscious by the sound of voices. Ever on alert, my brain-commander general of mind, body and soul-immediately rang alarm bells, screaming of possible danger, awakening every slumbering nerve with a jolt, and demanding my sleep-thickened eyelids to force themselves open and investigate the threat.

Mumbling in muddled confusion, I gradually focused on two strange creatures before me. They were curious little creatures, and I took much time in examining them. They were small, with four paws at the corners of the body, which they waved and stomped in agitation. Their twitching, pointed ears were held back, flat against their rounded heads. And their long whiskers trembled and shook in time to the flourishing of their tails. The first little one had a thick coat of soft downy fur, giving it a dainty, haughty air, while the other was covered with short black bristles, scrawny and mischievously evil.

They sat primly on the edge of my bed, and appeared to be deeply involved in hoarse conversation. Nay, I should say fiercely hissing and spitting, claws and teeth extended and poised for action! For the darkly colored one was livid with fury, its furry face was almost beet-red in coloration, and sparks of rage literally flew from flashing emerald eyes. The other appeared as calm and unruffled as the sea after a violent churning; yet, the pale blue eyes were frigid and sharp as an ice-chilled dagger. As I stared in amazement, I dimly realized that I was able to comprehend their speech.

"You are wrong, I say, wrong! How can you say such horrible things?" The sweet, beautiful creature with the coat of purest white caught and held my attention. Its whisper was like angel wings, a baby's first breath, and the peal of bells ringing in the New Year. "You've forgotten the raw power of yellow in the gold of the sun after an eclipse, the Pinks and oranges of a sunset late in the evening and sunrise at the crack of dawn, the Blues of the nighttime sky, the slivers of silver in the shooting stars and comets, the Greens of grasses blanketed with early morning dew, purples of the majestic mountains, and-most importantly-the radiant rainbows of bursting flower buds that signifies spring!"

The figure's words became images filling my head, colors overlapped and kissed, painting a picture of unsurpassed beauty beyond my wildest imagination. I sighed happily, and my eyes blissfully drank in the heaven-sent scenery. Just then, the second figure cleared its throat and chuckled dryly. My mind abruptly cleared at the grating sound.

"My dear," It rasped huskily, sending shivers racing and dancing up and down my spine. "Always disgustingly optimistic as usual, I see. Wake up and use your eyes! How can you forget the blackness of mindless war, and hate-filled crime? The mud-browns of dirt and filth freely rampaging in the streets and in the homes? The ruby reds of innocent bloodshed, the inflamed white-hot colors of infection? The sickly yellows of disease, and the heart-wrenching hues of anguished tears? Open your eyes! Don't be so blind to the colors of the world!"

"No, don't you be blind!" The other pleaded. "Open your eyes to the true colors of this world!" As it spoke, the sweet creature had a look that contained a thousand words I can never pronounce merely using our alphabet. Those clear blue eyes held a thousand emotions I can never express no matter how hard I might labor. I swear to you, no human can possibly duplicate that single look!

"Idiot!" Its companion spat and glared, negativity and belligerence clearly written on its face, body, and lips.

Unable to remain quiet and still a moment longer, I opened my mouth to speak...and suddenly, abruptly, I was hearing the shrill, insistent peeping of my alarm, smelling the early morning aroma of fresh-brewed coffee dripping in the pot. (My roommate was too bored and too hungry to wait for me to rise and greet the new day, I suppose.)

I couldn't help feeling the painful wrench of mind and soul, the aftershock of wild fantasies and dreams. Yes, I had a remarkable experience that occurs only once-or more likely, never-in a lifetime. It changed my life; it inspired my present and my future; and it lifted my spirits skyward until I was dancing with the angels!

Well, perhaps I exaggerate. Regardless, my experience did leave me bewildered and with a sense of incompleteness. The fact remains that Earth-my home, my pride and joy-is the source of an unsolved debate: What are the world's true colors? Who was undeniably righteous and who was utterly wrong? Is Earth dark, cruel and ugly, or light, innocent and pure in loveliness? Dark or light? Dark or light? Dark or...and...light?

If I should meet up with those creatures of my dream-world again, then I won't be merely the listener, silent and still in the background. No! I will grasp them both by scruff of their necks, kneel to place my mouth near their ears, and whisper quickly before they fade from view and vanish from my life: "I consider that both of you, my nighttime visitors, could hold some truth to your words. The world is an unsurpassed beauty, a safe and nurturing haven to all who may have needs of one. But lurking beneath a comely exterior is a ghastly nightmare and a hid-

eous house of horror. Because of the wondrous, deadly, split-personality combination, my world is painted in contrasting colors, dark and light, angelic and demonic."

With that, I shall release them, and eagerly await their reply. They may squirm and protest, or thank me breathlessly for ending their squabble. Perhaps they'll simply blink their long eyelashes and vanish, or become angered at my intrusion. But, then again, perhaps for once the optimist and the pessimist might agree. They may rise up on their toes so that I may hear, and purr sweetly,

"The world is what you make of it, my dear."

Erika Galluppi

Night falls,

And a mysterious presence

Is felt.

A whooshing of a cape

Is the only sound that is heard

Throughout the night.

A tall figure,

Dressed in dark clothing,

Slowly glides out from the

Pitch black of night,

His red eyes glowing.

The lamp light

Makes the figure's

Brass arm glint.

After a moment of

Deathly silence,

The figure moves out

Into the darkness once more

Sarah Pink

The Babysitter's Nightmare

Finally, the last complaining child in bed,
No sounds save that from the television cowboy,
Shooting his way through the dusty town.
No more pouting, fussing, and hate-filled glances,
And drinks of water, stories and nightlight on, off.
I can rest, at ease, and wait to be relieved of my burden.
And yet...
It's too easy, too comfortable, and far too quiet.
There must be something wrong, some little thing I've forgotten,
Teeth still stained. Unsaid prayers.
Maybe a wet baby diaper, could that be?
But no, I checked all that, all is well.
No, I feel dread creeping up my spine, I must check again.
I start up the stairs, almost at a run, panic rising in my throat.
I throw open a bedroom door, on goes the light.
No, this child is peacefully slumbering.
The next room down a child lies sulking. No harm here.
But...the silent crib in the corner, it must be the baby!
Peering down at the still infant, her face pale in the moonlight,
I try to force myself to relax, yet do not fully succeed.
There is a danger- every instinct of mine screams out.
And so I examine the child; yes, she's too still, too quiet,
No breath shakes her tiny frame, she doesn't move.
Blood racing in fear, I gently shake her.
Please, no, I'm seeing things! Wake up!
She doesn't move, and my still-screaming instincts kick in.
Numb from the neck down, my mouth dry as cotton,
My brain jerks me around like a puppet.
My hands feel for a breath- a pulse, there is none,
My ear bends to feel a heartbeat, very faint. She's alive!
I pry open the little mouth, and examine inside.
Nothing visible.
No small toy, no lodged food, no choking hazard.
Nothing? Why, then, is there no breath?
I call to the huddled and whimpering child behind me.
Be brave, little one. Be a good big brother.
Wide-eyed, he rushes to the nearest phone to get help.
I breathe for the child, and push down timidly on the chest.

I cock my ear over her slack jaw, straining to feel air echoing on my cheek.
Nothing.
I repeat, breathing, pushing and straining harder, desperation setting in,
Nothing.
Mechanically, I get into the rhythm.
Breathe, Baby, Breathe!
Nothing.
Breathe, Baby, Breathe!
Nothing.
Come on!
I can hear the forsaken wail of sirens,
My rescue is here at last.
Too late! There is still no rise and fall of the chest.
Yet I do not give up, can not give up, will not give up.
Breathe, Baby, Breathe!
And by the flickering red lights pouring in from the window,
I see two pale eyes blink as the tiny one shudders with life.
She coughs weakly and looks up at me, confused and weary.
With a gasp, I jerk awake, my eyes refocusing on the TV.
The cowboy is riding off into the sunset, his job is done.
The house is quiet and peaceful.
Everything is safe.
Front door opens, and I am rescued.
Thanks, we'll call you again. Is everything okay?
They say, handing me some crumbled fives,
I smile and nod.
No worries. Yes, all is well.

Erika Galluppi

My Mother Sharon

God made a special mother,
one whose spirit never grows old.

With sun filling her smiling face,
and a heart that's made of gold.

In her eyes you see the stars,
and in her cheeks, the sky.

Her embrace is like a field of flowers,
only these ones never die.

Her voice is gentle and calm,
just like the soothing sea.

God made a special mother,
and God indeed gave that mother to me.

Adrienne Johnson

Split

Light forces its way into my bedroom,
As I search for consciousness
I weigh the pros and cons of rising from the warm haven
Eyes, still closed, replay
horrific images of the night before
I am - now awake - I am
29 years old - white male, single,
again. She had no sympathy;
my heart shredded by her tongue
I didn't mean to hurt her, all's fair
isn't it?

My brain catches up with my feet as they were heading
towards the bathroom
Bulb sparks more light; eyes flinch
Fists drawn, the champ's ready for the match;
A fighter's manic profile reveals the turmoil within
I stop, recognizing the monster in my reflection
Who was it? Not me
It's him.
I would never do that,
He's the fighter; I am the champ.
The one in the looking glass, it was him.
I reach for my toothbrush and think of her smile
Lost to me forever, yesterday
I bow my head
I spit into the porcelain bowl
I take a deep breath, inhaling scents of Crest and shaving
cream
I slap myself into reality with aftershave
Swearing never to see him in the reflection again,
My right fist raises in affirmation
The champ swings - fighter takes the blow
TKO
With broken flesh and scarlet-covered weapon
I declare the victory.

Cynthia Knight



Prism